

One of the biggest challenges of his background investigation work was to get people supplying information about persons under investigation to be specific.

He recalled the time he was interviewing an elderly woman in a small rural town who was the former neighbor of an applicant for a CIA slot.

The woman insisted that the applicant was "bad, through and through," but added that the details of the young man's misdeeds were too terrible to recount.

Convinced that the applicant had a background notched with felonious activities, Lynch pressed the woman for more information. Finally, after nearly a half hour of his pleading, she relented.

"It turns out," he said, "that this poor guy shot out all the lights on a community Christmas tree with his air rifle when he was 12 years old. That's not quite the kind of thing that knocks you out of consideration for a job with the agency."

Life in the CIA bears somewhat of a monastic imprint, Lynch said.

Agents are not supposed to make public statements on any matter regarded as "controversial" and are not allowed to leave the country without formal written permission, Lynch said.

Agents are also supposed to avoid conspicuous or ostentatious behavior, and cannot marry without agency permission. For Lynch, the latter regulation proved less restrictive than for others, because he met his wife, Louise while she, too, worked for the CIA.

Lynch says he missed out on all the cloak-and-dagger activity frequently associated with CIA. Although trained in the use of 38 and 45 caliber pistols, he never carried a weapon on duty and was never shot at or physically assaulted.

He resents recent charges about alleged CIA "domestic spying." Never, he said, did he ever encounter any incidences of breaking and entering, bur-

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EX-AGENT RECALLS

Cloak, Dagger Career Began With Vague Ad

By LARRY PETERSON
Register Staff Writer

TUSTIN—When John V.

Lynch answered a vague ad in a newspaper in 1951, he didn't realize he would be joining a top-secret agency now under suspicion of spying on American citizens.

The Tustin private investigator now feels that his 22 years as a CIA agent qualifies him to dispute the "erroneous, distorted" picture being painted of the sometimes cloak and dagger organization.

Lynch became an agent with the newly created Central Intelligence Agency after graduating with a degree in English and social studies from St. Francis College in Loretta, Pa.

He thought he would become a teacher but when such positions eluded him, he worked briefly as a machinist.

Then, he saw the ad in a local paper offering "good pay for college graduates who want to work for the government in Washington, D.C."

Despite the vagueness of the advertisement, Lynch responded.

He reported for interviews and testing at a building in the capital bearing no sign of a federal agency, but merely the street numbers. It was only halfway through the interview and testing process that he was told he had applied for a position with the CIA.

After brief stints as a top-secret courier, a night security officer and safe technician, he worked from 1954 to 1973 as a senior special field investigator on loan from CIA to the Department of Defense, serving mostly in the Southwestern U.S.

Lynch describes the principle focus of his duties as "information gathering." He was responsible mainly for doing security checks on persons applying for CIA or defense department positions, but also scrutinized security arrangements for companies working on sensitive government contracts.

glary, or other illegal activity by any agent during his 22-year career.

The 49-year-old private eye claims many published newspaper accounts of CIA activity are erroneous, distorted, or both.

"People who are unfamiliar with investigative work tend to get things turned around," he said. "And people tend to forget that much of the information we gather, especially when it pertains to applicants for high posts or sensitive jobs, is favorable, not derogatory."

He called the barrage of recent stories "debilitating" to the morale of CIA personnel and said that similar unfair statements about the FBI have led to like results on its personnel.

"The Soviet government," he said, "must be especially gleeful to see these two groups undermined. Many individuals are unconsciously furthering Soviet aims in the United States, and some of them are doing more harm than if they were on the KGB payroll."

"And the things which are said are terribly unfair to the families of the unheralded agents who have given their lives in some obscure, faraway place so the rest of us can be a little freer and more secure."

Lynch said his work was full of daily disappointments. But that he never got completely frustrated. "It's the kind of endeavor in which you learn not to become frustrated. You just have to learn to be patient. Otherwise you lose your perspective."

And there were setbacks which he shared with other agencies as a group. Although he said he was not involved in any of them and did not know details, he said his greatest organizational disappointments were the Bay of Pigs, the U-2 incident, and the Pueblo capture.

But there were rewards, too, like getting to meet four presidents and his association with six CIA directors.

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